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SUBJECT: P3 + UNITED NATIONS MEETING ON SOMALIA IN LONDON

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY. The United Kingdom (UK) Foreign and Commonwealth Office reached out to invite us to this P3 United Nations (UN) meeting on Somalia one day prior to the two-day International Contact Group (ICG) on Somalia meeting commencing in Brussels. Discussion topics included recent political developments, the Transitional Federal Government (TFG)/Alliance for the Re-liberation of Somalia Joint Security Force and African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), humanitarian and development issues, and the possibility of a UN peacekeeping operation (UNPKO). Acting Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs (AA/S) Phillip Carter urged the UK, France and the UN to immediately support the new unity government with concrete resources before the current window of opportunity to establish basic political stability and security closes, and suggested that the international community set pragmatic and achievable goals for three, six, nine months and one year from now. AA/S Carter stressed that although we are currently reviewing our government-wide strategy on Somalia, the United States views Somalia as a national security issue as well as a threat to East Africa and the homeland. END SUMMARY.

RECENT POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

¶2. (SBU) The UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) Ahmedou Ould-Abdullah opened the meeting by stating that Somalia is a danger for the region that must be addressed by linking governance, security, humanitarian and development approaches, as these issues cannot be successfully addressed individually. New York, Washington, Paris and London must coordinate more directly on these issues, according to the SRSG. The SRSG also noted that the unity government has legitimacy in the eyes of most Somalis and asked that the international community consider removing certain individuals from sanctions lists as well as work more with Somali diaspora communities. AA/S Carter responded that although the United States shares many of the same perspectives held by the SRSG, UK and France, there is an urgent need to address the security situation in Somalia quickly and at a local level to reinforce recent political developments. &Supporting the (unity government) is very high risk, but the alternative is even worse,8 AA/S Carter pointed out.

SECURITY ISSUES

13. (SBU) AA/S Carter noted that three components of the security element need to be addressed: AMISOM, including technical assistance and material support; the unity government,s joint security forces (JSF), including requests for support from non-traditional donors; and messaging by Somalis and the AU. AA/S Carter stated that the real challenge is funding, and due to constrained budgets worldwide, non-traditional donors--such as Gulf Arab states, China and the diaspora--should be approached. Participants agreed that establishing security in and around Mogadishu should be the immediate focus so the unity government can get on its feet. The UN pointed out that AMISOM as it currently stands is incredibly underequipped and in drastic need of armor, an improved field hospital any many other elements to bring it up to par with UNPKO standards.

14. (SBU) Participants spent a majority of the meeting discussing the Somalia JSF and AMISOM, with AA/S Carter urging that the international community and unity government need to move forward as quickly as possible to establish a Somali security force and to enhance and expand AMISOM. AA/S Carter noted our funding of two additional AMISOM battalions and commitment to providing \$5 million to support the JSF to aid this effort. AA/S Carter also noted that we can likely fund one more additional battalion. With the African Affairs Bureau,s budget of approximately \$67 million in peacekeeping funds available in FY 2009 for Somalia, AA/S Carter stated that we can hold the status quo and fund two to three additional AMISOM battalions through November. However, if the UN is able to reimburse us quickly under the 607 Agreement being negotiated, AA/S Carter noted that we could potentially fund additional security efforts.

15. (SBU) France announced that it recently sent 40 military trainers to Uganda to assist in training the soon-to-deploy Ugandan battalion and that it would approach the Government of Djibouti to ask what assistance the government is willing to provide on the security front. The UK, while stating that it will likely not/not provide any financial support for the JSF, stated that it intends to lobby for additional troop contributing countries for AMISOM and has received encouraging responses from Gulf Arab states regarding financial contributions for the JSF. AA/S Carter also remarked that the international community should engage regional partners such as Kenya and Djibouti regarding potential training for the JSF, and asked participants to think about whether the new unity government should form a military or concentrate instead on internal security development.

Al-Shabaab

16. (SBU) AA/S Carter reminded participants that we see al-Shabaab as a terrorist organization consisting of a hardcore element associated with al-Qaeda and various fringe elements that may leave the group at any time. The SRSG commented that the USG policy toward al-Shabaab is helpful in that it places pressure on individuals within the organization; however, the USG should be more willing to remove individuals from terrorist designation lists. AA/S Carter responded by stating that the United States has certain redlines and AA/S Carter used as an example the fact that al-Shabaab spokesman Mukhtar Robow should not/not be allowed to enter into political discourse with the unity government, as Robow drives regional violence.

HUMANITARIAN AND DEVELOPMENT ISSUES

17. (SBU) UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator (RC/HC) Mark Bowden underscored the link between political stability, security and the humanitarian situation when he stated that the hesitance of the international community toward Somalia is negatively affecting the humanitarian situation. The RC/HC noted that the UN is negotiating humanitarian access

with local communities on a case-by-case basis under a common set of ground rules, and for the most part this approach has proven successful. The SRSR indicated that he would favor the UN World Food Program designing a new food aid distribution system as the current system, in the SRSR's opinion, is rife with corruption; however, the RC/HC and other UN representatives did not think a new system is necessary. The U.S. delegation stressed that President Sharif and the unity government must develop a work plan with the international community that clearly defines how the two sides will interact and prioritize on the humanitarian and development fronts moving forward.

UNPKO

¶18. (SBU) Although participants did not/not discuss the prospects of a UNPKO for more than a minute or two, the UK noted that it is &pleased with recent progress on the political front,8 possibly indicating weakened or diminished opposition to deploying a UNPKO. AA/S Carter stated that although the UNPKO issue will likely be addressed in the UN Security Council in March or April, the international community should focus on enhancing AMISOM and supporting the JSF.

MOVING FORWARD

¶19. (SBU) All participants agreed that the planned pledging conference to be held in May in Sweden would be too early and would precede Somalis solving problems that Somalis themselves need to solve. AA/S Carter noted that formal recognition of the TFG will likely become increasingly more relevant as an issue to be addressed by P3 and other governments. The UN announced that the next report from the Secretary-General on Somalia will be released on or around March 9 and will include an assessment of AMISOM and a work plan for bringing it up to UNPKO standards. Participants agreed to push countries present at the ICG in Brussels to commit to providing concrete resources for AMISOM, the JSF and the TFG as quickly as possible.

¶10. (SBU) COMMENT. This meeting helped to build consensus among the P3 and UN that establishing basic security and stability in and around Mogadishu should be the first order of business. The UK made it clear that they likely will not/not provide any financial resources to this effort outside of support for AMISOM salaries and seemed rather skeptical of the ability of the new unity government to survive for more than a few months or of the ability of the JSF to operate without committing human rights abuses. France seemed willing to contribute to security sector efforts, while the various UN equities present seemed disjointed on certain issues, especially regarding the delivery of food aid. END COMMENT.
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